

DOCUMENT RESUME

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Request by the Department of the Navy for Exception to GAO Travel Regulations. B-103315. October 12, 1977. 2 pp.

Decision re: Department of the Navy; by Paul G. Dembling, Acting Comptroller General.

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation (300); Federal Procurement of Goods and Services (1900).

Contact: Office of the General Counsel: Special Studies and Analysis.

Budget Function: General Government: Central Personnel Management (805).

Organization Concerned: China International Travel Service.

Authority: International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act (49 U.S.C. 1517). 4 C.F.R. 52.2, 3. 47 Comp. Gen. 204.

The Department of the Navy requested that an exception be granted to GAO travel regulations to enable Rear Admiral Maxine Conder to accept an invitation to join a group of American nursing leaders on a study trip to the People's Republic of China. The procurement of official passenger travel between points in the United States and the People's Republic of China arranged by a travel agency was approved since the services were not available from American air carriers. However, the tickets should be paid for by the traveler and reclaimed from the Government. (Author/SC)

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DECISION



Walter
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**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FILE: D-103315

DATE: OCT 12 1977

MATTER OF: Request by the Department of the Navy
for exception to GAO travel regulations.

DIGEST: The procurement of official passenger travel between points in the United States and the People's Republic of China arranged by the China International Travel Service is approved where the services are not available from American air carriers. However, tickets should not be obtained with Government transportation requests, but should be paid for by the traveler and reclaimed from the Government, using appropriate travel advances if desired to cover the cost of the travel procurement.

The Department of the Navy requests that an exception be granted to our travel regulations--which generally provide that travel agencies and foreign flag carriers will not be used for official passenger travel--to enable Rear Admiral Maxine Conder, Director, Navy Nurse Corps/Director, Nursing Division, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, to accept an invitation to join a group of American nursing leaders, who will visit the People's Republic of China to study health care facilities, training programs, acupuncture techniques and newly developed thermal treatment procedures for the purpose of increasing their professional skills.

This tour, which was arranged by the American Nurses Association, is only available through the China International Travel Service (LUXINGSHE), an official agency of the People's Republic of China, will begin on November 14, 1977, at San Francisco, California, and will end on December 8, 1977, at Los Angeles, California. The total cost of the tour is \$2,012 per person, which includes transportation via Japan Air Lines to Peking, China, via Tokyo, Japan, and from Peking, China, to Los Angeles, California, via Hong Kong, as well as meals, lodging, and miscellaneous non-personal services.

A cost breakdown for the separate services is not furnished. However, it has been determined that the cost of one-way coach air fares from San Francisco to Tokyo and from Hong Kong to Los Angeles total \$1,158. The value of the other transportation, meals, lodging, etc., cannot be determined from sources available to us. However, the overall price for all the services is believed to be reasonable.

B-103313

Under our regulations, 4 C.F.R. 52.2, which are promulgated in part upon section 5 of the International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974, 49 U.S.C. 1517, the use of American air carriers is required for Government-financed passenger transportation when such carriers are available. And under 4 C.F.R. 52.3 it is provided that travel agents generally will not be used where purchases can be made directly from American air carriers.

In 47 Comp. Gen. 204 (1967), the use of travel agents was authorized where it was administratively determined that group travel arrangements made by travel agencies offer substantial savings over regular air fares between points in the United States and points in foreign countries. In the decision it was stated that Government Transportation Requests are not to be used and that the transportation costs are to be paid for by the traveler, who may claim reimbursement. Appropriate travel advances were authorized to cover the costs of such procurement.

Since the tour package here considered includes all transportation services from San Francisco to the People's Republic of China, board and room for approximately three weeks, and return transportation services to Los Angeles, and since this tour is available only via the Japan Air Lines from and to the United States, American air carriers are not available for the services. In the light of these circumstances, the purchase of the tour package through the American Nurses Association and the China International Travel Service (LUXINGSHI) is approved.

Paul G. Demblin

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States